

Tips to Informal Caregivers on Giving Personal Care

Care for Burns

Burns are another household emergency that require first-aid treatment. (Training is available through your local American Red Cross).

The immediate hazards are:

- Shock
- swelling of tissues and breathing passages
- loss of body fluid through the burned area
- pain
- death

Infection is always a danger, especially if there are blisters or skin loss. The severity of a burn depends on its depth, size, location and the person's physical condition. Elderly persons are at greater risk from burns.

Four critical areas of the body are:

- hands
- feet
- face
- genitals

Burns on the face, nose and mouth may indicate burns in the respiratory system. This kind of burn may cause the passage to swell and interfere with the ability to breathe or stop breathing. If this occurs, give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation or CPR. If necessary, get immediate medical help.

A first-degree burn involves the top layer of skin. A second-degree burn involves more than the surface layers. A third-degree burn goes entirely through the skin and may burn the tissues below. Second and third-degree burns require immediate medical attention.

The purpose of first-aid treatment is to:

- relieve pain
- reduce the chance of infection
- reduce the likelihood of shock

Cool water can be used directly on a small burn that is not open or deep. Cool the area until the pain is reduced. Gently pat dry with sterile gauze. If the burn is over a large area, cool as above. Cover with a sterile dressing. Dry, insulated cold packs may then be applied.

Do not put water on deep burns because the skin and tissue are open and there is danger of infection.

Procedure for deep burns:

- Cover with a thick, dry, sterile dressing and bandage.
- Do not remove clothing stuck to a burned area.
- Dry, insulated cold packs may be used over the bandage.
- Have the person lie down and elevate the injured area if it does not cause more pain.

Get medical care as quickly as possible.

The above statements are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. You should always consult with your physician about any health and lifestyle concerns or issues you may have.